

Consumer Postal Council
Market Comparisons #2
Number of Letters Per Postal Worker

May 27, 2011 -- The productivity of national posts, as expressed by the number of business and personal letters per postal worker, varies widely, while the U.S. Postal Service averages more than twice the letter productivity of number two Korea Post.

The United States leads the category by a wide margin, with nearly 250,000 letters per postal worker in 2008, among the countries in the Consumer Postal Council's Index of Postal Freedom. That's nearly 140,000 letters per worker (full-time and part-time) more than the next country, South Korea.

The United States has the largest postal market in the world -- which more than counterbalances its sizeable workforce. From 2004-2008, the number of letters per worker in the United States increased 3.7 percent. But the sharp declines in mail volume that began during the first half of 2008 actually caused a net decrease in letters per worker between 2004 and 2010, despite the U.S. Postal Service reducing its workforce by more than 93,000 employees.

Most countries, 15 of 23 analyzed, saw the average number of letters per postal worker grow between 2004 and 2008. Seven of these countries notched double-digit decreases. South Korea's decline in letters per employee was the smallest, at just over 4 percent. Only Mexico posted a double-digit increase in letters per worker during this period.

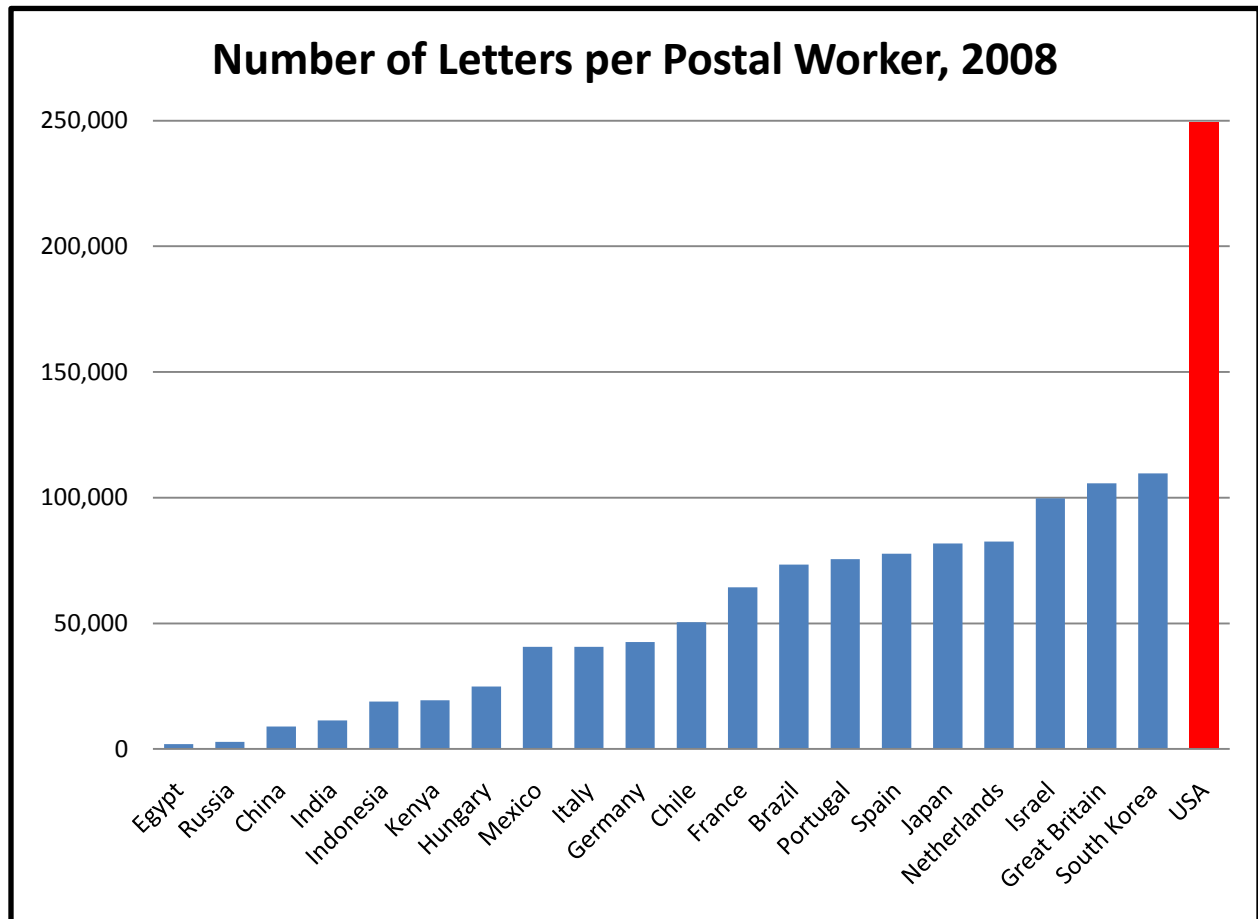
Russia's productivity has declined the most -- by more than 46 percent. In Russia, the number of letters per worker in 2008 was just 2,878. The country's postal workforce has increased by more than 110,000 since 2004 even as letter volume has declined by more than 89 million.

This indicator correlated poorly with population density, and only slightly with better per-capita GDP. China, India, and Indonesia ranked just above Egypt and Russia with the fewest letters per postal worker studied. In China, the number of letters per employee declined by more than 42 percent between 2004 and 2008.

Along with the United States, South Korea and Great Britain posted more than 100,000 letters per postal worker. Israel and the Netherlands rounded out the top five countries with the most letters per postal employee.

See graph below.

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Source: Universal Postal Union